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Transcript

Name: Bob Weidner

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Tape: 42

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Tape FLHP0090

20:01:03

Q:

Okay, the first question is always the hardest. If you could give us your name and then spell it, just to make sure we have it right.

A:

It's Bob Weidner, W-E-I-D-N-E-R.

Great. And we usually start with a little bit of a background, if you could tell us uh where you were born, a little bit about your family, where you went to school, how you uh, came to this area, that kinda thing.

20:01:23

A:

Well I was born here in Cincinnati, and was raised on uh, probably about within a mile and a half of where I presently live. Uh, went to grade school in Bridgetown at St. Aloysius, and my high school education was at Elder High School, and then uh, I went into the service for 3 years, in the Coast Guard, from December of '51 to December of '54.

20:01:53

A:

And then uh, had me workin' at the uh Cincinnati Gas & Electric Company with the survey crew, and then um, I went back to work with them until January of '57, then I went to Ohio State University, started my college education, I was going to night school at U.C., decided to go to day school. And then I, the following fall I transferred to University of Cincinnati.

20:02:20

A:

And then in 1961 I got my Civil Engineering degree, stayed on and got a Master of Science degree in Sanitary Engineering and I went to work for the uh U.S. Public Health Service in the division of water supply and pollution control, down in the test center involved in doing research work in storm water runoff.

20:02:43

A:

And then uh, the government decided to take the water program out of the public health service and created what eventually became EPA, but it wasn't, first it went to Department of Interior and then eventually became EPA. And I was a commissioned officer, in the public health service, so we had a choice of staying in the water program and switch to civil service status.

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20:03:08

A:

Or retain your commissioned officer status and switch to a different program. So I elected to retain my commission because my military time counted, and so I switched to what was then known as Division of Occupational Health. Uh, that evolved eventually into The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, NIOSH.

20:03:32

A:

Uh, they sent me back to school in Michigan and I got a masters of public health and industrial health in August of '69. And uh, then I stayed with the public health service. Let's see, '79, and I retired and then I was doing some private consulting and, and teaching uh, until January of '81 when I came to work out here.

20:04:04

A:

So when they added the uh American Congress of Governmental Hygienists, uh, newsletter that they were lookin' for an industrial hygienist, and uh so I responded, and had an interview with Mike Boback and Dick Heatherton and they hired me. So I was here in January of '81, and then I, (laughs) it was December the 7th, I can remember it very well.

20:04:35

A:

When, the uh, phone call from Oak Ridge came up wanting to question the uh, Plant 9 dust levels, and everybody else had left here because it was the company's Christmas party for the uh, all the division directors and uh, well the, not only the division directors but department heads of department and division directors were invited to a Christmas party.

20:05:09

A:

Well, everybody had left early to uh, get ready for the party, I had things I had to get done and I was probably the only guy left on site. So when they called, the phone, they called over at, they tried to get the plant manager, and, and, uh, he was gone because he had to get the place set up.

20:05:31

A:

Uh, Weldon Adams was gone, so they called Health and Safety, and I was the only one over there so I answered the phone. So I was the one that had to give the news to uh, to Mr. Spenceley at the Christmas party that he had to call them first thing in the morning, and this was a Friday so we all had to come in on Saturday, and that started the downfall of Fernald.

20:05:57

Q:

My gosh. (off camera: can we pause please?) Sure!

(Off camera: Paul said he'll be done with the interview by the time I find 'em all [laughs])

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20:06:14

Q:

Okay. That's funny. Okay. Um, tell me a little bit about your um, experiences working for CG&E, before you came to Fernald.

A:

Well, I got a job there because my dad worked there 44 years before he retired. Started out as a mail boy and then I got into the electrical engineering drafting department and then an opening came up with the surveyors and so I wanted to work outside and so I took the job with the surveyors.

20:06:48

A:

And one of the jobs that we had to do was plunge the um, proposed tire line from the Miami Fort substation to the uh, Fernald site. And so I was very familiar with the Fernald from the standpoint that I knew that it was a highly secretive uh, operation that was goin' on because of all the problems when we came up to this, this end of the line to locate the towers and things.

20:07:18

A:

Uh, we knew that, we, we, we got on the peripheral portions of the, of the site where the tire lines came in, and we never got on site uh, um, to do what we had to do. And then we, the reason we did what we had to do was we'd get, so the right of ways could write up deed descriptions to get permission to get Eastmans to run the tire lines over basically the farm lands that were between Fernald and Miami Fort Station.

20:07:51

And so we plunged a line through, cut a lot o' trees and bushes, and did what ya had to do, and then after they finally decided where the line was gonna be, why we then went back and located each tower, where it would physically be, established uh, you know, on the hill, in the valleys, wherever, wherever the engineers decided they would be.

20:08:15

Q:

Does Fernald have its own substation?

A:

Well, I'm sure they did. Yeah.

Q:

So you remember when they were building the site. Give us your impressions of that.

20:08:26

A:

Yes. There was a lot of activity. Boy, there were people everywhere. And uh, I remember a few times, a couple of times (chuckles) we were up there, it was, it was uh, right after it rained and mud was everywhere. I, I do remember that. But there were uh, you know, fences everywhere, barbed wire across the top o' some of 'em.

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20:08:42

A:

So it was obvious that what they were doing here was uh, something that you know, they wanted to be able to maintain control of. We didn't know, we knew it was gonna be a uranium processing plant because it was on the, the drawings and stuff, but we didn't know exactly what that meant or, you know what it was gonna be used for or anything.

20:09:16

A:

Uh, but everybody, even to this day thinks that it was, uranium was for making atomic bombs and stuff, but this was never, it was never part of the, the process here or never was.

Q:

What were some of the final products that Fernald had, and what were they used for?

20:09:38

A:

Well, one of the, the most important ones I guess that, that they, they used to make the fuel cell that would leave here and then go to like Goodyear, on uh, Portsmouth, where they would be enriched and then used for fuel cells. And then the other thing is they made uranium plates that at the time we were makin' 'em, we didn't know what they were bein' used for, but

20:10:04

A:

Eventually, we, it came out that, that, it was taken off of the uh, secrecy you know, the secrecy list you might say, uh, and uh but it was used to make armor plates for the tanks, the ones that were so successful in the Gulf War.

20:10:23

Q:

So you were here during that whole project as well.

A:

Yeah. Yeah.

Q:

That was the 4-A project?

A:

I think that's what it was called.

20:10:31

Q:

Okay, we'll get into that a little bit later too. I'm interested in that. So tell me about your first impressions of Fernald when you started working here as opposed to your impressions of Fernald before you worked here (laughs).

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20:10:46

A:

Well, (laughs) I guess this is kinda silly, but uh, having worked for the Federal government uh, for 20 years with the public health service, you know, you're used to the government ways of doing things. You know, the whole process you know. Then when I came to work here, I thought well, now I'm in private industry.

20:11:13

A:

I'm with NLO which is a private company and all o' this government was all behind me. And when I first walked in this place and saw all that government green on all o' the walls, I thought, why, I'm right back where I came from. (Laughing) It's actually no different here than when I worked with the public health service.

20:11:34

A:

And then after I got involved, I was, my first assignment was just as an industrial hygienist with the idea that uh, Mike was going to uh, move up to be at, be in charge of health and safety and then I would take over the industrial hygiene and radiation department. And it wasn't until I really got into that position that I realized just how much the government controlled the way NLO did business.

20:12:09

A:

And it was actually worse than workin' for the government. I mean all the nit-pickin' stuff that ya had to go through and to do. And uh, I think it was very frustrating for the people that ran the site here because, it, I don't know what stories shoulda been told but the people from NLO for the vast, vast majority were good people, very sincere people and tried to get do the best job they could.

20:12:40

A:

For the, as they say get the most bang for the buck, and they were always concerned about saving the government money and doin' things the best, you know, the best way that they could. Um, they kept equipment goin', that you couldn't buy parts for anywhere because it was so old 'cause DOE says we ain't got any money to replace it, so they made it.

20:13:00

A:

They would go in there, into the machine shops and actually make parts to, to fabricate 'em just so they could keep some o' the equipment goin'. So it's, they got a bad rap, and I think it's, they certainly didn't get the credit that they deserved, and I think part of it was due to the fact that, when, when the Plant 9 thing started, DOE had people involved who had no clue what was goin' on here.

20:13:28

A:

And when ya have a public meeting and you tell the people uh, at that meeting, I don't know, but I'll get back to ya. Doesn't give 'em a very warm and fuzzy feeling. You know, if, here's DOE that's supposed to have the answers and know what's goin' on there.

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20:13:44

A:

And they've got people up there and talkin' in front of the 250 irate citizens and sayin', I don't know the answer to that. I don't know what's in the pits I know that. And they had people sittin' in the audience, and wouldn't let 'em talk. And if they had let 'em talk, the whole thing would never have gotten where it got and where we're at today. There's no doubt in my mind about that.

20:14:07

A:

DOE had t-, two people to run the meeting had no clue what was goin' on. And when you tell people who're lookin' for answers, I don't know, and you're in charge o' the place, it don't set too well. So no matter what NLO said later on, just, people just wouldn't pay attention to 'em.

20:14:27

A:

But you know, they had answers, you know, they knew what was in the pits. They knew exactly what was in the pits. They could-a, could-a given 'em any answers that they needed, but they weren't allowed to talk.

Q:

And in your work in uh, the uh, industrial hygiene, and um, radiation? It was called radiation department?

A:

It was called Industrial Hydriation, Industrial Hygiene and Radiation, IH&R.

Q:

Um, what exactly was on site that could cause problems that you had to worry about safety?

20:15:02

A:

Well there was some thorium stored there that we were you know it was an area that we monitored constantly, and uh, and I'd say probably the worst thing on the site was, I think, you wouldn't wanna put a tent and sleep over it was the K-65 tanks. But, the vast majority of everything else around here was stuff, why, it wasn't that bad.

20:15:27

A:

Um, I know one of the things they asked me was, did you ever see anything funny that ever happened while you worked out here, and, I don't really consider it, we thought it was funny, but I guess it really wasn't. But there was one fellow whose badge started turnin' up high oh, it was before we had the TLDs, that was while we had the film badges.

20:15:53

A:

And it, in fact it was during the time that we were, we had people wearin' both badges. Film badge and the TLD so we were tryin' get, to see if there was a correlation between the, the exposures on the one system versus the other system.

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20:16:06

A:

And the one guy's badge, it was higher than we expected based on the work that he was doin'. And so uh, we put, we put, we double-badged him, put two on him, and they all came back the same. We uh, we stumbled across something by uh, havin' him leave his badges here instead of takin' 'em home.

20:16:46

A:

And then the next time we read the badges, they were in line with what, everybody else that he worked were. All the same range as far as the exposure levels. So uh, we (chuckles) so we said, where do ya put this thing when ya take it home?

20:17:06

A:

He said, oh, he says I've got an orange plate that I put, uh, all my stuff in, my keys, my change, everything, I put it in there every night on top o' my dresser, and in the morning, when I change pants I put the stuff back in, and we got to thinkin', orange. And we said, would you mind bringin' that plate in? And he says, yeah, he says, we got orange, my wife collects orange.

20:17:33

A:

We've got orange plates and s-, bowls and saucers and cups and everything all over the house. And so uh, he brought it in and we put the, put the meter on it and it went nuts. Absolutely nuts. It was covered with uranium oxide. And we said, can we, can we keep this plate? He said, yeah. I don't want it.

20:18:02

A:

So uh, when we were in the Fernald litigation, why, we used that plate as an exhibit uh, as to natural basically naturally occurring radiation that you could find in all kinda people's houses. And that's a very popular color and uh, for uh, plates and stuff that were made back in the '40s and '50s.

A:

It turns out that his exposure was not the exposure was not from the plant, it was exposure that was from that plate he was puttin' his, puttin' his badges on.

20:18:

Q:

Fiestaware! You know, I think that plate is still around here someplace.

A:

Yes. I'm sure it is.

20:18:39

Q:

I think they used it, I remember when I first got RAD training here, there were, they used a piece of Fiestaware and I bet it's the same plate (laughs).

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20:18:46

A:

Yeah. I'm sure it is. I bet it is.

Q:

Oh, that's great. Um, tell us a little bit about your responsibilities. Sort of, you had a couple of different jobs, first you were chief of Industrial Hygiene and Radiation department. Tell us first about, well, tell us about all your jobs ah, during your tenure here at Fernald, and the responsibilities you had.

20:19:06

A:

Well I was, (pauses) uh, s-, started out as industrial hygienist. And uh, I guess primarily I was involved uh, with reviewing uh, all of the uh, purchases that were made, uh, all of the engineering proposed engineering projects, to see if you know, the ventilation was adequate and, were putting in the right kind of ventilation.

20:19:37

A:

Uh, determine whether or not the uh, um, the, the materials that they were buying, if they were buying soaps, you know, were they the right kind of soaps. Or um, or they were, if the materials that they were using for, uh, rodent control, you know, was, we had to look at the whole, the whole picture as to what was being used here on the site.

20:20:03

A:

So that the people were using it were, were not gonna be unnecessarily exposed, and if, if they had to use certain things, then we had to institute certain um, control measures to make sure that their exposures were minimized as much as possible.

20:20:16

A:

And we were involved, I was involved with the um, respiratory protection program. And when I took over as chief of the Industrial Hygiene and Radiation Department, we were responsible for the badging of all the people that worked here as well as the visitors, the temporary workers, contractors.

20:20:40

A:

Uh, and once again, every purchase order came through IH&R and had to be signed off on to, to uh, and if we had questions about it, we would go to the people who, who uh, wrote up the, the purchase order and to question them as to what it was to be used for and so on and so forth.

20:21:00

A:

And sometimes we were able to uh, recommend uh, alternatives that were, would do the job, as far as they were concerned but were a lot safer as far as the worker was concerned. So we had to monitor all of those uh, like I said, purchase order, every purchase order no matter how small or how big, we had to go through every one and put an approval on it.

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A:

And Bob Lippincott, in the Safety department did it from, from his, you know, from the safety standpoint, he would, he would review 'em. He was in charge of Fire and Safety. And then later on I became um, head of the uh, all of Health and Safety. And that was, well anything you can think of, it was health and safety, it was my responsibility.

20:21:48

A:

And I was in charge of that until Westinghouse took over. And then when Westinghouse took over, uh, Lou Bogar was the uh, basically in charge of what was Health and Safety and then I was in charge of Industrial Hygiene and Safety department.

20:22:07

A:

They put uh, hygiene and safety together and then they had a separate group that was concerned with the uh, radiation. They made another department just for that.

Q:

And what was the safety culture like here? I mean, I guess pre-shutdown and then post-shutdown, how did it change?

20:22:34

A:

Well, it, the only thing that really changed was the fact that uh, before the shutdown, I mean, radioactive materials being handled on a, on a regular basis. And after the shutdown, there was no you know, the processes that were involved with the production end of it were no longer being used, so there was less to be, less operations that needed to be monitored.

20:23:04

A:

But ah, as far as the material, it was all still here. I mean so you know, if things were bein' moved, as far as the actual security end of it, I don't think there was really much in the way of change, in fact if anything it probably got, I think uh, because of the uh, stuff that was in the press and the news and everything, uh, it actually heightened the security.

20:23:35

A:

And there was, there was a greater emphasis on making sure that, that people you know, knew where they were going and what they were exposed to and, and so I think greater restrictions placed on the ability to go around the plant site uh, as time progressed. And I saw it increase tremendously after NLO left and Westinghouse got involved.

20:24:02

A:

And I have to, personally I have to believe it was because Westinghouse had people here that really didn't know what was going on. They had backgrounds in other areas of radiation, uh, it's the uh, what we would call high level versus low level, and it's, it's a tremendous difference between how you handle the two different products.

20:24:24

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A:

And they handled, their thoughts were that radiation is radiation and you can handle, your concerns have to be matched with uh, it's not, they're all the same, and they're not. And so uh, and then you know, since Westinghouse left and Fluor Daniel came in, and I haven't had a whole lot o' contact with, with the people from here.

20:24:49

A:

You know, with, what's going on, on a daily basis, but from all that I know of people's comments, it certainly hasn't gotten any less. And I think they've spent an awful lot of money, wasted an awful lot of money on unnecessarily on stuff that, that wasn't necessary.

20:25:13

A:

And I think it's all because, the people that they brought in weren't familiar with what was, what was here and the problems were that were here. And I truly believe that if they'd left NLO here, this job would have been done a long time ago, and for a lot less money. Because they had, they had the experts, you know, the world's renowned experts that, working with low level radioactive materials were here.

20:25:37

A:

You know, they grew up with it. They knew from day one, I mean they learned on the job basically. I mean because back in the '50s there wasn't a whole lot that they knew you know, about low level exposures and whether it was, or what kind of exposures created what kind of problems.

20:25:55

A:

And so they grew up with it and they you know, they knew, they knew what was goin' on back in the '80s after you know, after 30 years of, of working with the stuff. And you had some o' these people were here from the beginning. So it's not like, you know, like, which is what happened with the people from Westinghouse and Fluor Daniel, I mean they brought people in that didn't have that experience.

Q:

And who was ultimately uh, responsible for the workers' safety while you were here?

20:26:30

A:

Well actually it was the plant manager. He was ultimately responsible. Obviously he delegated that to other people, me bein' one of 'em, and before me, Mike Boback. And, and then you know, obviously we couldn't be out watching everything so we had to, we had our own departments too.

20:26:51

A:

We had people that were responsible for the different areas to, to make sure that uh, the procedures were set up, and obviously we, we had to write off on all the procedures that were implemented. And then, and of course DOE durin' their annual inspections would come in and review all of the procedures and give us the okay or the nay or whatever they wanted changed.

20:27:17

A:

And then based upon their recommendations after each visit, we would either implement what they s-,

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what they suggested or um, debate 'em as to why we didn't think what they suggested would be of value to this site. And sometimes they admitted that, yeah. We knew more about it than they did and based upon what we said, uh, they were willing to back down from what their recommendation was.

20:27:43

A:

And the plan that we implemented was, was better than what they had suggested. I mean, so it wasn't always, it was a two-way street. I mean, they, they had some people down there. The people that were working in the individual areas like Industrial Hygiene, Safety, those people were pretty sharp. And they, they pretty well knew what was going on.

20:28:05

A:

It was when you got to the higher levels that the, that that knowledge seemed to dissipate somehow, I don't know (chuckling) why. But the people that we worked with were for the most part were pretty good people. I think there were some people who that were in the environmental area that weren't uh, weren't as up to speed with what they shoulda been and they caused a lot o' the problems that we ran into.

20:28:34

A:

Uh, only because they, they weren't familiar with what they were working with. They were reacting I think, to the, the press and the, and the, you know, the people that lived around in the area that were doing all the complaining and you know that this place is terrible. Obviously I don't agree with 'em.

20:28:57

A:

Uh, we, we uh, we did some little things we wanted to check like with the exposures of the person that lived closest to the plant. Like if you lived at the fence line.

Q:

Are you rolling out? (Off camera: Just, we're getting' close.) Okay. We need to change tapes. Let's do that right-. (Laughing) Hold that thought, because I really wanna get back to that.

Tape FLHP0091

21:04:05

Q:

Right, right, right. Okay. Um, I'm sorry, if we could back up to uh monitoring in around the fence lines. You'd talk, talk to us again about that.

A:

Yeah, when, when it became uh, important to determine what the people who were living in the area were exposed to, we set up some monitoring equipment at the, in the fence line, to, and said you know, if somebody lived there 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for a year, what would their exposure be? Uh, we determined what that will, would be.

21:04:39

A:

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And then uh, to determine how that fit in with normal occurring radiation, background stuff, we sent a couple of technicians down to the Hamilton County Courthouse and had 'em monitor the uh levels of radiation there.

21:04:55

A:

And it turns out that uh a person if they were there 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year would have had a higher exposure than the people that would have lived on the fence line due to the natural occurring uranium that's in granite.

21:05:11

A:

And like I say, we, we uh passed that information on to the, to the people in the uh, in the news media, but that never, never made the papers. Um, I don't remember what the exact date was, but it was probably somewhere around the 12th or 13th of December.

21:05:30

A:

When the uh press release was issued, the reporter from the Cincinnati Enquirer came out and I was asked to, to provide her with answers to all the questions that she had, and then we spoke for around three hours. And I put together uh, copies of our environmental monitoring reports, results of the exposures to the uh, Plant 9 which is the plant that caused uh initial questions.

21:06:01

A:

And uh, I gave her a stack of papers that was probably 6 inches thick of stuff that was you know, it wasn't sensitive material, it was, it was, DOE gave us the okay to release it to 'em. And then uh, none of that, well some of it got into the papers, but none of it, it was all in a bad light.

21:06:26

A:

Uh, and that the uh, she made it look, and the people at the Enquirer made it look like it was uh, due to her digging into the files to find all this stuff, and it was handed to her. And uh, that's always bothered me, that they wrote it up as such.

21:06:45

A:

A matter of fact, some years later, we found out that the Enquirer had uh, was putting themselves up for a uh, oh I forget what award was it, uh, Nobel was it? Is there a Nobel award, award for uh writing?

Q:

Mm. Yeah. It's, I think you can get a Nobel for.

(Off camera: For journalism)

21:07:11

A:

I think that's what it was, and they put themselves up for it. And we found out about it. So I sent a letter to the committee, and f-, sent them copies of, of the documents that we had sent them. And that they had misled the people. We had letters from the Ohio Department of Health in, in quest-, in response to

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questions raised by the Fort Scott people.

21:07:41

A:

Saying that the plant uh, is of no concern as far as any exposures to any of the kids that're staying at the, at the thing. Uh, that's not what got in the paper. What got in the paper was the plant, that the Fort Scott people were concerned and all of this and that, but not the letter that they were, that I personally handed to her. So I know they had it, saying that it was not a problem.

21:08:08

A:

Uh, we had letters from the Ohio Department of Health sayin' that uh, the uh, the amount of uh, uranium that was in the groundwater was nothin' to be concerned about. It was nothing above what we, you could, what you found as background levels in other parts of the, of the state and country.

21:08:27

A:

And uh, but none of that ever got in the paper. And I don't know whether my letter had anything to do with it, but they didn't get the award. So I felt good about that. I mean that. To me, if you're gonna be a good reporter, you ought a report the facts and not bias it with your own personal opinions. And uh, that, that was not the case with anything that ever appeared in the papers.

21:08:49

Q:

Now with that whole Fort Scott issue, uh, was there sampling done on their site?

A:

Oh sure. Constantly. Oh yeah.

Q:

Could you tell us about that?

21:08:57

A:

We, we did monthly samples uh, soil samples. We didn't do monthly soil samples; we did monthly water samples, from the, from the uh, the river, uh, from the streams. Uh, from the uh, wells from the different, different locations.

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21:09:17

A:

Uh, we had air monitoring stations set up along the periphery of the plant and then we had couple other ones that we would set up at occasionally to uh, to, to monitor the, the uh, any contaminants that might a been in the air.

21:09:30

A:

And this was done, like I said, we had, I don't know if that got on before, about uh, doin' the samples of the milk of the cows that were on site. That was done on a monthly basis. And uh, we never ever found any elevated levels of uranium in the cows. In fact one time, uh, one of our control sites, which was like 25 miles uh, west of the plant, upwind of the prevailing winds.

21:09:56

A:

Uh, several times the uh, the samples from those cows were higher than the, the amount of levels that were in the cows that were here on site. And uh, like I said, all that information was given to the, the papers but none of it ever got in.

Q:

Wow. And uh, (laughs a little). Um, tell me a little bit about the surrounding communities as well. The folks that lived in this area. How did they react to the media, and did you ever have contact with the public?

21:10:32

A:

I personally never did. Uh, that was generally handled uh, pretty much Weldon. Weldon was kinda the spokesman for the, the company at the, at the public meetings and stuff. It was, it was unfortunate, I felt sorry for the people that lived in this area. That they weren't getting the facts. They weren't getting what I felt, was the, the true story, behind what the, what their concern should be.

21:11:04

A:

And even to this day, I still run into people that say, oh, here's so and so has got cancer, and it's no doubt it's the result o' Fernald. You know. In fact there was somethin' in today's paper, front page. And if you read it, the headlines are just a tad bit misleading. Because the, nowhere in there does it say that this, these are definite conclusions.

21:11:28

A:

It's all, well this, this might be, and this may be, and it's all preliminary, and all this stuff, but the headlines doesn't say that. And that's you know, that's just one more instance of the, the, it's the way the press is. I uh, it's, they just do it to sell papers and they don't care whether, I don't think they care whether it's the truth or they're misleading somebody or not.

21:11:47

A:

And it's not right to the people. I mean there are people who believe what they read. And they think that s-, since it's in print, that that makes it a fact, and it's not the case. And so, uh, my, in fact my daughter-in-law uh, was one of the people who was raised in this area. And uh, you know, she always was concerned

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about, in fact she gets her physical like everybody else.

21:12:17

A:

And uh, she, I don't think she feels nearly as concerned any more since she's, since she's talked to me about it. (Chuckling) Uh, but I'm sure that there're a lot o' people out here uh, in, in all honesty I think a lot o' the people out here uh, saw a chance to get some money. And so they jumped on the bandwagon.

Q:

So what did you tell your daughter to put her mind at rest? What's the truth?

21:12:46

A:

Well, there's, based on all the studyin' and the sampling that we've done for 30 some years, uh, the level exposures to the, to the people living in this area is basically negligible. I mean it's not, it's not like they're sittin' on top o' the K-65 tanks. Or it's-.

21:13:05

A:

As a matter of fact, they did a study, the state of Ohio did a study on uh, radon. And they put samplers all around the plant. Put 'em in people's front yards. Put 'em in people's basements over in Ross. And the amount of radon in the houses in the basements was many times higher than it was at the fence line at Fernald. Not the same; higher. Many times higher.

21:13:34

A:

But you don't see much o' that readin', gettin' in the paper either. But it was done by the state, not done by us. The state of Ohio did it. And it's, I mean it's, radon is naturally occurring. And if you are over an area where radon's in the ground.

21:13:50

A:

And, and you got cracks in your concrete floor in the basement, it's gonna be there and it's gonna stay because you don't have much air movement in the, in a cellar or basement. And so the amount of radon keeps coming up and it's gonna, the concentration's gonna get higher. So if you move the air then, then you can get rid of it and get the levels down.

21:14:16

A:

That's what they recommend to some o' these people you know that had the high levels. Uh, but then even those levels, even though they're higher than what's at the, the fence line, they're still not levels high enough, I don't think to, to create any serious problems with the people that are livin' there.

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21:14:33

A:

I mean you're not sittin' in that basement 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. And you'd have to have higher levels than that, even if you, if you were there all that time, to before it would cause problems.

21:14:47

So, it's, it's unfortunate that the media does what it does. I think it does a disservice to the whole, whole community, and gets people stirred up unnecessarily. Didn't they just come out with a study the other day that said that the silicon breast implants really, they can't prove anything, that they've ever caused any real harm to anybody?

21:15:12

A:

But that doesn't stop people from suin' 'em and recovering billions o' dollars, and that's, there's no doubt in my mind that's the reason this got where it was because of the money that was involved, and uh, it's unfortunate.

Q:

Tell us about the litigation years. What did you personally have to go through during those years?

21:15:35

A:

Well, I was uh, I got involved with the uh, became, like I said, I was with the uh, Westinghouse when they took over for a year, 14 months I guess it was. Until um, let's see, it was '87. I think it was February of '87 when NLO approached me to uh, since I was involved with the Health and Safety, and also was an attorney, they asked me to come back to NLO and run their post-operations office.

21:16:12

A:

So, I went back to the, left Westinghouse to go to NLO over at the Colerain office. And there, we basically were, one of our, the biggest projects we had was going through all the millions of pages of documents to build the database.

21:16:30

A:

So that uh, when discovery came up as far as the plant goes, we could provide it in a meaningful way so that we could, you know, find, what, what the uh, what they were getting and also for our attorney. So they had a history of what went on from day one to, to the time that, unto the time of litigation.

21:16:56

A:

And so I, I kinda, I was basically in charge of NLO, I went to manager. And uh, we uh, had a local firm that uh, called Frost and Jacobs who was involved with the uh, um, the environmental aspect of it which was the, the um, against the FRESH group, you know, the people who brought the first suit.

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21:17:26

A:

Uh, and then um, Beirne and Wirthlin, they were involved with they uh, from way back when, of for uh, workman's comp type stuff, so they were involved with the individual litigation. And then we were involved with the DOE lawyers obviously. And um, and then later on a firm from Chicago was brought in. Jeez. I cannot believe I can't remember their name. (Pauses) Terrible.

21:18:05

A:

Anyway, they, we, our role was to, to provide the information that the lawyers needed to defend the lawsuit. And that was basically in the form of documents that were, as well as setting up depositions for different people, that were involved with the different operations that went on during those times.

21:18:29

A:

And uh, we had to build a database, to, to do that and uh, that was uh, an enormous project. So that to get it to where the lawyers asked a question about this or that, we were able to pull up letters, reports what have you, that gave 'em the information that they were looking for.

Q:

And what was the result of all the class action suits?

21:18:55

A:

They settled it. Should never have settled it. But it was a political decision, because um, the um, DOE's attorneys that were um, they were actually the um, well I should back up a little bit uh, Judge Spiegel who was the judge in the case, as a uh, a gimmick that he uses where he has a uh, it's kind of a mini-trial in which you don't have any witnesses.

21:19:31

A:

The lawyers present their cases to a jury, a regular jury that's chosen like a normal jury would be chosen. They present their case by saying so and so's gonna testify and he's gonna say this, this, and this. And then so and so's gonna get on and he's gonna tell ya this, this, and this. And then they deliberate based on the information they got from both sides.

21:19:57

A:

And then uh, um, he tries to use that as a means to get both sides to see the relative strength of their case and basically hopes that they settle it. Well, we did that, and, there wasn't any doubt in our mind that we woulda won the case if we'd gone to trial.

21:20:23

A:

And before, before we got to trial, the uh, the DOE attorney who was the head attorney here representing NLO in the, in the Fernald residents suit, got a phone call from Washington. And that was on a, I believe it was a Monday afternoon. No, it was a Tuesday afternoon. And said, I don't care what cha do, but have the case settled by close of business on Friday, whatever it takes.

21:20:55

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A:

And the, we had the uh, settlement, we had 'em down to I think it was like 2 million dollars to settle in our preliminary negotiations. We said, We ain't gonna settle for that because we know, we know we can beat 'em. And s-, the next time he gets back to Chesley to talk settlement, the price has gone like way up (snickers).

21:21:23

A:

And it's obviously, to me, it was obvious to me that Mr. Chesley knew what was goin' on and been told that the, so the price went up. And so the DOE attorney had no choice but to give 'em their price, which is what it ended up.

21:21:42

Q:

For the majority of what happened at Fernald, who got blamed?

A:

Well, it was uh, if you really studied the documents, uh, NLO had a share of the blame just because they were here. But they recognized problems that needed to be fixed. They sent letters to DOE saying, we need this, we need that. DOE came back and says, you gotta keep the plant runnin' but we got no money to give ya to fix it up. Just keep it runnin'.

21:22:21

A:

The uh problem that we got here with the uh pits, there's letters on file where DOE, from NLO to DOE saying, Don't put the pits in. We think it's a terrible idea, they'll never work. They're gonna do nothin' but cause problems down the road. DOE says, put 'em in. None o' that stuff ever got in the newspapers, but they're there. They're still there I'm sure. It wouldn't take much to find 'em.

21:22:49

A:

Uh, it uh, the ultimate blame has to be DOE, because they're the ones that controlled the funds. And when, when NLO came down and said, We need money for this and need money for that. We gotta fix this, we gotta fix that. We got a problem with this ventilation system up. We got a problem here, we got a problem there.

21:23:07

A:

Uh, there's just, I don't know, probably hundreds of such requests that just went unheeded and you know, the documents are there from DOE sayin', we don't have the money. So I mean if you wanna push the blame further back, then ya gotta push the blame onto Congress because they're the ones that allocates funds to DOE.

21:23:28

A:

And somebody decides in DOE is that well, we got so much money, and this, this money's gonna go here and some of this money's gonna go there and go there. And uh, the other real projects like at

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Hanford and, and Oak Ridge, and oh, the other sites were far more important than you know, little Fernald.

21:23:49

A:

And you know, we weren't doin' the highly technical stuff, you know the really, heavy research and stuff that was goin' on at these other sites and so they, they got the money and we didn't. And as far as I'm concerned, that's basically where it comes down to. It wasn't that the stuff wasn't recognized.

21:24:09

A:

NLO recognized the problems that they had, what they expected to have and it's all on record. And they were turned down on a regular basis.

Q:

There's a lot of industry in this area, the Cincinnati area. Um, if you put Fernald, safety wise, up against a lot of the other industries, what are the most industries in town, and where does Fernald fit in? Well, there's a lot o' places, that I would not wanna live next to and wouldn't have no problem livin' next to Fernald.

21:24:44

A:

Uh, that, that does reminds me of a uh, there is somewhat of a funny story. Uh, when I was in charge of the uh, Industrial Hygiene and Radiation, uh, right after the Plant 9 stuff came out in the paper about, oh about a month later I got a call from a guy sayin' his mother owned the farm that was just in (gestures with his left hand straight up) the northeast corner of the plant site up there.

21:25:15

A:

He said, we been tryin' to sell the place for 4 years. Now we'll never be able to sell it. And he said it's uh, you know, what're ya gonna do about it? I said, well there's nothin' I can do about it. I said, if you want, I'll be more than happy to come out. He's got a, he said he was concerned about his wells bein' contaminated.

21:25:31

A:

I said, we'll come out and sample your wells for ya and tell ya exactly, you know, we'll give ya the results of the tests. Well if you could do that I'd appreciate it. We did that, we sent the guy out and got some samples and sent them back to him and there was nothing there really. And uh, so I called him to give him the information and he starts rantin' and ravin' you know.

21:25:52

A:

What're ya gonna do about buyin' me out? And all that stuff. And I said, well, I tell ya what, I said, I'm lookin' for a little land. I said uh, oh, he prefaced his req-, by sayin', well, I won't be able to get uh, a thousand dollars an acre. And he had like 90 acres. And I said, I'll be more than willin', I'll personally buy your 90 acres at a thousand dollars an acre. I'll give ya a thousand dollars an acre.

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21:26:18

A:

Well, well, I, that's not, it's worth a lot more than that. I said, well what's it worth then? Well he never would give me a dollar figure because he thought that by holding out he would be able to get a lot more money from the federal government. But I'd a bought it in a heartbeat, without a doubt, 'cause uh, there's nothin' but sand and gravel under there and that's worth a lotta money.

21:26:45

A:

Certainly worth more than a thousand dollars an acre I can tell ya that (laughing).

21:26:50

A:

But, no, I would be very concerned about living next to a place like Monsanto, with the chemicals they have. Anything they got is far, far more dangerous than what, what's on this site. Any, any chemical plant like that, wherever they're at. They're, I mean if they ever had an explosion down there, you'd see some serious problems.

21:27:15

A:

Uh, you know, they talk about, you know, we had to do studies on you know, what the probability is of a tornado coming through here and wiping out the K65 tanks and what would happen. Uh, you know, I guess it's always a possibility, but I think the probabilities are pretty slow, pretty low that it's not gonna happen.

21:27:42

A:

But you'd have some serious problems if a tornado wiped out Monsanto I'm tellin' ya. Not that, not that Monsanto doesn't take care o' their, you know, they, they're very conscious about what their problems are but on a scale of 1 to 10, if I had to my choices of where I'd live, 1 - bein' yeah, I'd live there versus 10 - I wouldn't.

21:28:08

A:

Uh, I wouldn't have any hesitations about livin' across the street from Fernald. I'd give it a 1 or a 2 and certainly give Monsanto a 9 or a 10.

Q:

So why do you think the general populous is more worried about Fernald than they are about chemical plants?

21:28:24

A:

Because it's radioactive materials, somethin' they can't see, it's invisible, they don't know what it is and they've been fed a lot o' bad information. Uh, you know people who, **they don't think twice about getting' chest x-rays, or getting' their teeth x-rayed. And the amount of exposure in either one of those cases is far more than they ever get from livin' around this place.**

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Q:

Wow. Do we need to switch tapes? Okay. I just have a few more questions. You're doin' great. This is an interesting point of view too. It's been.

Tape FLHP0092

22:01:15

Q:

Okay. So all this litigation and those types of things that happened during the mid '80s, how did it affect other DOE sites?

22:01:27

A:

Well it, it obviously became um, of importance to them because I think they saw that maybe they were next in line to, to uh, to be sued by the residents or the workers or whoever. And uh, so it, it uh, what NLO did became very important to how things were handled at the other DOE sites as far as litigation goes.

22:01:58

A:

And so every year at the lawyers' meetings that they had, NLO's update was always an important part of the, of the meeting. You know they tried to learn from some o' the mistakes that were made. And, if the uh, if we'd a had our way, we'd a gone to c-, we'd a gone to trial.

22:02:25

A:

And I don't think there's any doubt that we woulda won the trial because we talked to the, we polled the jury after the uh, mini trial that they had and the vast majority of the people said that uh, we, we weren't concerned about you know, that the people were exposed and we, they were exposed to something but basically it was of no concern.

22:02:50

A:

Uh, you know, the levels were so low that we didn't feel that anybody was really harmed. And we felt that the information that, that was presented at that trial uh, would've, you know, would've proved that, assuming that the witnesses that we put on the stand versus the witnesses that they put on the stand were people who uh, could sell the story.

22:03:13

A:

Uh, we did a deposition of a guy whose name was Mockajani (?) who was our environmental expert, and uh, we asked him uh, and since I was the, an engineer and an industrial hygienist, and the uh, I was kinda the uh, expected to be the technical person to give the information to give to the attorneys as to the types of questions that ought a, ought a be asked.

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22:03:43

A:

And so I told 'em they need to ask him some very simple, basic questions. Um, like he's talkin' about exposures and the amount o' dust goin' outta the, uh the stacks and stuff. Well, one o' the things you, you use is called iso-kinetic sampling. He didn't even know what it was. He's supposed to be their expert.

22:04:04

A:

Ask him to describe a uh, a bag house. He said, well it's a wool bag that's got stuff stuffed inside it. Well that's not the way a bag house operates. And, and, I mean, he had, there was a whole series of questions that he had no clue as to what was goin' on, and yet he was the expert and if you check any of the uh the FRESH stuff.

22:04:27

A:

And check any of the newspaper articles that was written why he's, he's the expert. And everything he said you know was cast in concrete. And uh, uh, it, the guy didn't know what he was talkin' about. He was no more of an expert than, than um, my uh, my granddaughter is at you know, 3 years old. But he uh, he made a lot o' money, sayin' the things that he said.

22:04:53

A:

And, but we never got a chance to put him on the stand. Uh, he woulda made a terrible witness. Just readin' his deposition to the, to the jury, people said, well how can they put him up there? You know. Obviously he doesn't know what he's talkin' about. But that ain't the way it came out in the newspapers.

22:05:16

Q:

Is Fernald the most dangerous site in the DOE complex?

A:

I'd say it's the least dangerous, based on what I know at the other sites. Now I'm not you know, involved with what, I know that, you know. Goin' to the industrial hygiene meetings down through the years and stuff, uh, knowing what materials they handle and what, you know what the end products are and stuff, I'd say Fernald was uh, was the least of the worries.

22:05:42

A:

And if they hadn't brought the stuff from Niagara Falls down here and put it in the K-65 tanks, there wouldn't-a been anything here other than the thorium that they had in the drums, that would've, you know, woulda been any real health concerns. And as long as the thorium was kept in the drums, it was only a problem to those who were, were around the drums.

22:05:58

A:

And you know, we restricted those times and uh, you know, that, was a, that was one o' the things that NLO had suggested to DOE years ago was to you know, we don't need it. We don't use it. There's no need for us to have it. You know, why can't we do something else with it. If nothing else, pack it up and send it to somebody else that needs it?

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22:06:22

A:

Well we'll look into it. We'll look into it. And now you know, now it's gone I guess, but I don't know if it's still, if it's all still gone or not, but uh, you know, it was uh. And you know, there were problems with storin' it because, you know, they were stored in metal 55-gallon drums. And they rusted away because you know humidity and what else, what have ya.

22:06:47

A:

And so they had to be replaced periodically. And of course the people that worked on doin' that job were properly clothed and wore respirators and you know they weren't really exposed to it. And as far as their external exposure, they wore badges, film badges and TLDs depending on when it was done. And uh so that there, nobody ever got overexposed by workin' on that stuff.

22:07:10

Q:

And speaking of worker safety, um, what kinds of safeguards were in place, especially during the process years, to keep people safe?

A:

Well I'd say the film badges were probably the, the number one means of, of trying to monitor a person's exposure. Uh, the people, w-, well had to change their clothes, every day. When you came in you stripped down to the au natural, and put on uh underclothes and T-shirts and socks and jumper suits or whatever, whatever depending on where you were working.

22:07:49

A:

Uh, the company provided everything. From shoes right on up to the caps, and hats, hard hats, whatever. And uh, when you came in at noontime to eat in the lunchroom, you had to shower first. Then put your, put your civvies on go upstairs and eat, and then come back down, change outta them put on fresh clothes, go back out into the process area and in the evening when you were finished, took another shower.

22:08:16

A:

And there's some funny stories, I've never, I never saw it but they talk about uh, some guys wouldn't wanna take a shower. They wanted to get out you know, in a hurry. And so in order to uh, try to minimize that happening, they put in deluge showers so you had to walk through 'em in order to get from the, what they call the dirty side to the clean side.

22:08:44

A:

And guys would climb walls, literally climb walls so they wouldn't have to walk through the, get wet with the deluge showers (laughing). I never saw it done, but there's a lot o' guys that'll tell ya they saw it. And uh, you know, it was for their own protection and yet they would do those kinda goofy things to keep from uh, havin' to take a shower.

22:09:06

A:

And you know, everything was provided for 'em. And like I said, um, their external exposures were monitored with, during the earlier years with the film badges and then later on we had the TLDs. And uh, you know, there were health and safety inspectors that were goin' through the plants, every day.

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22:09:35

A:

Uh, you know, had regular tours that they had to make sure that the proper safety equipment was being used and if not, they got wrote up. And if, if it continued, guys were laid, got time off for not doin' what they were supposed to do.

22:09:53

A:

It's uh. I remember one time we uh, when they were building the Pilot Plant. Um, down there uh, the, don't ask me why, but they uh, there was a guy that came down there f-, from where they were building the plant, and uh, refused to put on a uh, (gestures with his hands in front of his shirt toward the buttons) on a uh, they had, oh, like a robe, that you know, white lab coat is what they called 'em.

22:10:23

A:

And you'd have to wear a lab coat and a, and some kind of a head covering. Well this guy would go down there with his, in his, civvie clothes. You didn't have to change your clothes, you just had to put shoe covers on, put a lab coat on and some kind of head covering.

22:10:36

A:

Well he wouldn't do it. And one of my uh, industrial hygienists went down there and saw it and told him you know, that he had to go back and get, get, get the proper attire. And he said, well I'm not puttin' it on. And so he uh, they called me up and said, what should we do? So I called Mr. Devir who was in charge of security and I said, I got a problem down at the Pilot Plant.

22:11:01

A:

And I said, I just wanna know if I got your backing, to uh, if this guy won't put on what he's supposed to wear. You know, can we escort him off the site? And he says, Tell me when you're goin' down and I'll have somebody meet you there.

22:11:16

A:

So I went down, immediately left my office and the security guard was there, and we went in and told the guy that you know, if he wants to continue being on the site, he needs to adhere to the regulations. And that means put a lab coat on a hat and shoe covers. You know, he started moanin' and groanin', and I ain't got time for that stuff. I said, Well you're gonna have to take time because there are no exceptions (laughing).

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22:11:45

A:

If you're out here, this is what ya gotta have. Now if you wanna change your clothes, we'll give ya a complete set o' clothes. I ain't got time for all that stuff! And he said, the guard says, well, you either put it on or you're leavin'. I'm here to escort you off. So he went back and got a hat and coat and put shoe covers on. And came back out.

22:12:11

Uh, but there were just some people who just refused to, to do what you know what the rules and regulations were, just, for whatever reasons. You were concerned about their health and safety. And yet, I mean we had, we had guys that would play games with their badges. They'd take 'em off and lay 'em on a, on a ingot, a uranium ingot, just so they'd get their exposures higher.

22:12:37

A:

You know, and uh, we knew, based upon what the badges read, when that was bein' done. I mean they thought they were getting' us, but we knew when they were doin' it. (Laughing) And so we just, we would, we'd have our guys go out and uh, just kinda meander in the area watchin' the guy and when we'd catch him, then we'd report him to his supervisor and they'd give him a warning.

22:13:05

A:

And if he persisted in doin' it, then they'd, they'd give him days off. Most a the guys weren't that way I mean, I'd say probably 99.9 percent of the guys were doing what they were supposed to do. And, and you know, took the showers and changed the clothes, and but there's always a few guys that think they, that those things don't apply to them. And so they're the ones that create the problems for everybody else.

22:13:33

A:

But uh, I, you know, this is, as far as I was concerned, this was one of the most monitored, and, and one of the safest places I've ever worked at. I've been, I've been in every asbestos plant in the United States, been in every beryllium plant in the United States. Uh, most ah, fiberglass plants, all these when I worked with the public health service.

22:14:00

A:

And uh, none o' those places, and I was in every foundry in the state o' Michigan. And none o' those places, were, come close to, except for the beryllium plants, that uh, that had the safety measures and health measures that were in place in you know, in operation like they were here.

22:14:22

Q:

Hmm, that's great. And um, you just had the opportunity to, to look at some photos of the cleanup, and what are your impressions of what's going on at Fernald right now?

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A:

Well it looks like they're headin' in the right direction. Uh, I, I'm glad that they finally decided that not everything had to be shipped offsite. Uh, I mean, we, it was, that was one o' the things that we had decided way back when.

22:14:53

A:

And since, not being here, you know, I'm really unaware of all the things that have gone on in you know, in the last few years, but looking at the pictures, it looks like they're, they're doin' all the stuff that we suggested, way back when. Back in the '80s, we suggested that to do these things. Maybe they started readin' some of our stuff, I don't know (laughs).

22:15:21

Q:

And uh, they're moving right along with the cleanup pretty quickly, and they're gonna be tearin' down a lot o' buildings. And uh, eventually, all the buildings are gonna be gone, what would you personally like to see done with the, with the land?

22:15:34

A:

(Pauses) I, I, well I, I don't think that there's any reason that it couldn't be converted into some kind of a recreation area. Uh, there's no doubt in my mind that what's gonna be left here is not gonna be of any, any significant health risk. Uh, you know, if you dig down enough, and get one o' them I-beams out and drop it on your head, that you know, that might cause you a significant health problem.

22:16:02

A:

But I don't, I don't think from a radiation standpoint, I don't see why that would be of a concern to anybody. Um, 'cause I know what they're shippin' off, and personally, I don't think all the stuff they're shippin' off has to be shipped off, but in order to, you know, with the sensitivity that's associated with the site, that's probably the you know, in the long run is probably gonna be the best decision.

22:16:28

A:

Uh, but from a pure technical standpoint, I don't, I don't necessarily believe it's that, that that's really necessary, but uh, from a public relations standpoint, it probably is.

Q:

Great, um, see if I covered everything. I will ask you this quick question. Generally, how do you feel about having worked at Fernald?

22:17:00

A:

Oh, I, I had it to do over again, I'd certainly do it. I've never uh, I had nice people to work with, very uh, some o' the most technically capable people that I've ever worked with, and uh, I think that they were very conscientious. They were concerned about doing the right thing, and uh, you know, trying to make sure that the job was done right and safely, and, and for the least cost.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript

22:17:39

A:

I mean they were very concerned about it and, and, and in fact I think that was part o' their problem. I think that they had down through the years, had managed to do things, uh, without, givin' DOE uh, as much complainin' as they should about you know, bein' under-funded to do the things that they were required to do. I mean they would find ways to do things that, that just because they were smart people.

22:18:07

A:

Uh, as opposed to forcin' DOE's hand sometimes. The other sites were obviously bigger, had more clout and so when it came to, to uh getting the funds to do the things they, they needed, Fernald was kinda the stepchild I think.

22:18:29

A:

And uh, I think, if ya look back through the history of how the monies were spent and where they were spent and what it was spent on, I think you'll see that, that NLO, you know in retrospect, compared to all the other companies that were running the other sites, did one hell of a job. And I'm not, I'm very proud to have said that I worked here and, and was associated with these people.

22:18:53

A:

I know a lot o' people won't agree with me, that live over in, in the neighborhood, but uh, I don't think that uh, NLO's been given near the credit that they deserve. And certainly don't, the, the, to be discredited like they were.

22:19:11

A:

'Cause uh, like I said, there's a whole history of documents where NLO recognized the, the existing problems and potential problems, and sent the information to DOE and were just turned down. And I mean they're there. It's not the things that people remember, oh I remember this or I remember that. The documents are there, and if you pull 'em up, you'll find 'em.

22:19:36

A:

And I'm sure, I know if you talk to Weldon, he can give you verse and chapter uh (chuckles) as to, as to which one is what. Um, Weldon has a fantastic memory, and um, he worked very closely with the, with the attorneys in, in the litigation, and was a very valuable person.

22:19:56

A:

And if we'd a, if they let us go, we, we would've, we woulda won the case. There's no doubt about it, we woulda saved DOE a lot o' money.

Q:

Great, is there anything you want to add, anything we didn't cover that you wanted to cover?

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

22:20:13

A:

No, I don't think so. I think we hit on, I'm not sure that everything I said is very useful (laughing). But it's just, having been involved in the litigation, it was very frustrating to have the facts at your disposal and then find out that they were being twisted and manipulated by the opposing council and the newspapers. And there's no doubt in my mind that they were working hand in glove together.

22:20:47

A:

And uh, it was uh, very frustrating. And if DOE had, had let us go, I, I don't think there was any doubt that we woulda won uh, the litigation. In fact, there are several cases that went to fruition. Uh, employee suits that uh, was a wrongful death suit uh, that uh, we won.

22:21:10

A:

Because the judges and the jury agreed that there was absolutely no evidence there to, to link what the person claiming to have done, died from was related any way whatsoever to uh, his work here at the plant.

22:21:28

A:

So there's no doubt in my mind, with the residents' litigation, we'd a won it, and uh, part o' the problem that ya had was that uh, there were a lot o' people comin' here who, who uh, had uh, positions of ah authority uh, EPA people, and they had no clue what was goin' on.

22:21:54

A:

And so they were makin' demands for things that couldn't be done. They were settin' time tables for stuff that, it was, if ya knew what was goin' on, ya knew they could not be met and yet, in all honesty, uh, I uh, remember one time I went to a meeting when I was working with Westinghouse.

22:22:13

A:

And I was just supposed to be there as an observer, to report back to Mr. Bogar what my feelings were about what was going on. It was a meeting between the Westinghouse environmental people and the EPA. And uh, I went back from the meeting, I said, Westinghouse is gonna be in serious trouble here. He says, why?

22:22:34

A:

I said, well, the things that they're agreeing to, within the timeframe that EPA is givin' 'em, it can't be met. I don't care how many people you got, ya can't get what they're talkin' about doin'. You can't get it done in the time that it takes because it takes so much time to do this, and to do that, I mean, I don't care how many people you got you can still only can do so much within a certain amount o' time.

22:22:56

A:

And you're gonna run into problems, and the next thing you know, you're gonna be in violation because you didn't meet, meet these deadlines. And I hate to say this, but I was right. It turned out, down through the years, Westinghouse got in all kinds o' problems because they didn't meet the deadlines that they had set.

FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT
Transcript

22:23:13

A:

In fact, he was talkin' about (pointing over his right shoulder with his right thumb) they're puttin' a place out here because of the monies that they were fined, and ah, since they can't take money from one hand and put it into another, they said well, do this you know. And they're building something out there with the fine money.

22:23:28

A:

And I know darn well it's one of those things that I told 'em about. Ah, it, cause EPA people didn't know what was, and all they were doing, far as I was concerned, ah, Westinghouse people and EPA people were trying to make themselves look good in the paper, on TV or whatever it was. Ah, just to say we're doing this and we're doing that.

22:23:57

A:

And, and not being realistic about what they were doing. And the whole things prove, I've been vindicated in what I've said. Because everything that I said was goin' take, cause they got rid of the people that knew what they were doing. And that was the NLO people. If they had left them here on site, I guarantee this place would have been cleaned up a long time ago, and a lot cheaper.

22:24:21

A:

'Cause they had the people that knew what they were doing. And they kept bring in more people and more people. And more people they brought in, the fewer people they had that had any idea what was going on. And then the NLO people that were, that were ah, still here, that stayed aboard with Westinghouse ah, were getting very frustrated because of, of that conditions.

22:24:43

A:

And they were ready to retire, or about to retire and they said why should I put myself through all this, and they retired, you know. And so, some of the key people they tried to bring back I know to ah, to be "consultants" and ah, they ah, I'm sure they were very valuable people that they brought back, but some of the people, once they left, they were gone and they never did come back.

22:25:10

Q:

Well thanks for taking time with us today.

A:

Okay, you're welcome.

Q:

We really appreciate your interview. It was great. And now we do something called nat sound. Natural sound that will just take a second. If you could just sit a second ah, if we can have quiet on the set and get a room tone, a general, what the room sounds like when it's quiet so, this is nat sound.